

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

WESTERN ARCHIVES



THE J. ROBERTS HOLMES FAMILY FONDS

AFC 75

Inventory prepared by Alison Mitchell-Reid, based on student finding aid project(s) undertaken in partial fulfilment of archives course requirements - September 2009

**WESTERN ARCHIVES
AFC 75
THE J. ROBERTS HOLMES FAMILY FONDS**

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THE J. ROBERTS HOLMES FAMILY FONDS
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FONDS DESCRIPTION

Dates

1903-1904, [ca. 1920], 1929-1986

Extent

55 cm of textual records
1 photograph
2 albums (160 photographs)
ca. 150 post cards
1 cloth bag

Biographical Sketch

J. Roberts Holmes was born in Toronto in 1908. He came to London in 1925 to work at his uncle Wendell Holmes' bookshop at 190 Dundas Street. In 1956, following the death of his uncle, Holmes went into business for himself with his own stationery and book company, Roberts Holmes Ltd. Roberts opened his first store at 258 Dundas Street, moving to a larger space at 240 Dundas Street in 1962.

Roberts Holmes' stores emphasized self-service, allowing customers to feel free to browse at their leisure. Merchandise included books and stationery as well as school and office supplies, decorations, and gift wrap. The lower level of the store was devoted to the "Paper Book Shop" which boasted a selection of 5,000 titles.

J. Roberts Holmes married Ruth (née Wainright) and they had two daughters, Barbara and Nora. Holmes was also active in several associations. He was the president of the Western Ontario division of the Stationer's Guild of Canada and regional director of the Canadian Bookseller's Association. Holmes was also a member of Metropolitan United Church and a member of London's Canadian Club and the Rotary Club.

In 1974, Holmes sold his business to long-time employee and store manager Betty Lang, who continued to run the business until 1996. Betty Lang purchased 248 Dundas Street in 1978 and moved the book store operation back to its original location. The larger store at 240 Dundas Street remained open, focussing on stationery, school supplies, and other merchandise. Holmes continued to be involved with store operations for several years after his official retirement.

J. Roberts Holmes died on December 14, 1989.

Scope and Content

This fonds contains the documents of the personal and business life of J. Roberts Holmes. Correspondence, financial records, publications, souvenirs and photographs are included. Letters between James and Elizabeth Wainright, father-in-law and mother-in-law to J. Roberts Holmes, are also included.

Arrangement

The fonds is arranged into the following series:

- Series 1: Business correspondence
- Series 2: Financial and administrative records
- Series 3: Photographs and post cards
- Series 4: Canadian Booksellers Association records
- Series 5: Business and convention documents
- Series 6: Elizabeth Wainright correspondence
- Series 7: Publications
- Series 8: Personal souvenirs and other documents

Finding Aids

File and item lists are available.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Donated by J. Roberts Holmes' daughters, Barbara (Holmes) Hyatt and Nora (Holmes) McGill, in 1996.

Conditions Governing Access

No restrictions on access.

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS and FILE LISTS

Series 1 Business correspondence

Dates

1956-1974, predominant 1956-1960

Extent

20 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains the business correspondence of J. Roberts Holmes. Letters informing suppliers of the new business and letters to negotiate payment terms predominate.

Arrangement

The majority of the files in this series were organized in a tabbed alphabetized file folder. These documents have been moved to individual file folders for preservation reasons; the ordering and labelling of the new folders follows the original organizational structure.

File/Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
A correspondence	1957-1959	B616-1
B correspondence	1956-1959	B616-2
C correspondence	1956-1959	B616-3
D correspondence	1956-1959	B616-4
E correspondence	1956-1959	B616-5
F and G correspondence	1956-1974	B616-6
H correspondence	1956-1973	B616-7
I and J correspondence	1956-1959	B616-8
K and L correspondence	1956-1960	B616-9

M correspondence	1956-1960, 1974	B616-10
N and O correspondence	1956-1960	B616-11
P and Q correspondence	1956-1960	B616-12
R correspondence	1956-1957, 1960	B616-13
S correspondence	1956-1960	B616-14
T correspondence	1956-1962, 1974	B616-15
U and V correspondence	1956-1960	B616-16
W to Z correspondence	1956-1960	B616-17
Letters re: new store 240 Dundas St. 1962 + Free Press official write-up	1962	B616-21
Letters re: credit	1962	B616-22
Thank-you letters	1962	B616-23
General correspondence	1954-1974	B616-24

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Series 2 Financial and administrative records

Dates

1957-1976

Extent

2 folders of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains financial and administrative documents relating to the Roberts Holmes bookstore. Detailed financial statements and documents relating to the sale of Roberts Holmes Incorporated to Betty Lang are included.

File and Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Yearly financial statements – Roberts Holmes Limited [vol.]	1957-1973	B616
Sale Roberts Holmes Ltd.	1974-1976	B616-19

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Series 3 Photographs and post cards

Dates

[ca. 1920]-1974

Extent

1 photograph
2 albums (160 photographs)
ca. 150 post cards

Scope and Content

This series contains photographs of J. Roberts Holmes and of the bookstores with which he was associated. Photos of the stores and some of the employees are included. Ontario post cards of scenes in London, Guelph, Peterborough, Port Stanley, Port Burwell, Brantford, Kapuskasing, Ottawa, Orillia, Toronto, Niagara Falls, and Kincardine are included, as are several Dionne quintuplet souvenir post cards.

File and Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Photograph of J. Roberts Holmes	[ca. 1970]	B616-18
R.H. Store 1962-1974 [vol.]	1962-1974	B618
W.H. and R.H. Stores 1947 to 1962 [vol.]	1947-1962	B618
Ontario post cards	[ca. 1920]-[ca 1970]	B617-19

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Series 4 Canadian Booksellers Association records

Dates

1959-1960, 1974

Extent

2 folders of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains correspondence and other documents relating to J. Roberts Holmes' tenure as chairman of the Canadian Booksellers Association public relations committee.

File and Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Canadian Booksellers Association correspondence	1959-1960, 1974	B616-25
Canadian Booksellers Association survey results	1959-1960	B616-26

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Series 5 Business and convention documents

Dates

1937, 1944-1985

Extent

7 cm of textual records
1 cloth bag

Scope and Content

This series contains souvenirs, correspondence, and other documents relating to J. Roberts Holmes' life as a book seller and businessman. Advertisements, clipped from the London Free Press, and a cloth bag with the Roberts Holmes logo are included.

File and Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Stationer Guild of Canada convention Quebec 1937, 1945, 1948, 1951	1937, 1945, 1948, 1951	B616-27
National Stationery and Office Equipment Association conventions Chicago	1944, 1952	B616-28
Stationers Guild of Canada conventions Toronto and Windsor	1953-1954	B616-29
Canadian Office Products Association convention – Vancouver	1970	B616-30
Niagara Falls C.O.P.A. convention	1971	B616-31
Roberts Holmes Ltd. Advertisements	1974-1985	B616-32
Advertising and Sales Club of London	1945-1961	B617-8
Roberts Holmes logo cloth bag	[ca. 1970]	B616

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Series 6 Elizabeth Wainright correspondence

Dates

1903-1904

Extent

1 folder of textual records

Biographical Sketch

James H. Wainright was born near Peterborough, Ontario in 1866. He married Elizabeth (Della), on February 25, 1890. Elizabeth was born in Warsaw, Ontario in 1870. The couple settled in Cobourg, Ontario and had seven children:

Mary L Wainright Brown (1891-1984)

George A Wainright (b. 1892)

James Earl Wainright (b. 1893)

Robert Leland Wainright (1897-1933)

Della Beryl Wainright (1900-1978)

Muriel Wainright (1902-1949)

Ruth Wainright Holmes (b. 1905)

Sometime between 1903 and 1911, the family moved to London, Ontario. James worked for the C.S. Hyman tanning company, travelling North America on buying expeditions. He retired in 1927.

James H. Wainright died on February 23, 1953 and Elizabeth died April 3, 1954. Mr. and Mrs. Wainright are interred in section W of Mount Pleasant Cemetery in London, Ontario.

Scope and Content

This series contains letters written by James H. Wainright to his wife Elizabeth, parents of Ruth (Wainright) Holmes. James Wainright wrote these letters while on a business trip from Ontario to western Canada, down the west coast of the United States, to Mexico, and back.

File and Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Letters (Wainright)	1903-1904	B617-9

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Series 7 Publications

Dates

1929-[ca. 1930], 1932-1960

Extent

5 cm of textual records

Scope and Content

This series contains publications written by, or collected by, J. Roberts Holmes.

File and Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Articles written by Roberts Holmes	1945, 1960	B616-20
Curious Paper Facts – United Paper Mills	[ca. 1930]	B617-1
Canada – Ocean to Ocean, Paper Making, and Niagara the Unconquered	1929, [ca. 1930]	B617-2
Publications re: Roberts and Wendell Holmes	1932-1960	B617-15

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Series 8 Personal souvenirs and other documents

Dates

1929-1934, 1950-1986

Extent

20 cm of textual records
3 maps

Scope and Content

This series contains souvenirs and other documents of the personal life of J. Roberts Holmes. Theatre programs, pamphlets, maps of London and Middlesex County, and documents relating to Holmes' membership in several local clubs and associations are included.

File and Item List

Title	Dates	Box/File
Stratford Shakespearean Festival programmes	1954-1965	B617-3
Call Boy – London Little Theatre programmes	1959-1965	B617-4
Grand Theatre programmes	1931, 1950	B617-5
Alma College St. Thomas calendar	1977	B617-6
London Normal School yearbook	1929-1930	B617-7
Canadian Club	1975-1985	B617-10
Rotary Club	1973-1986	B617-11
Rotary Club	1959-1986	B617-12
Various Programmes	1934-1955	B617-13
Ontario pamphlets	[ca. 1930],1985	B617-14

Title	Dates	Box/File
U.W.O. Alumni affairs	1978-1982	B617-16
U.W.O. Theatre programmes and pamphlets	1929, 1950-1981	B617-17
U.W.O. Senior alumni program	1981-1986	B617-18
Maps	1948-1951	B617-20